

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 AGRE-00 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 DODE-00 FRB-03 H-01 INR-10 INT-05 L-03
LAB-04 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 CTME-00 AID-05 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0072
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COTONOU
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O.11652:N/A
TAGS: SOCI, EPAP, MG
SUBJECT: GRAIN SITUATION IN NIGER

1. FONMIN TOLD ME SATURDAY, APRIL 22, THAT THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO INSERT GRAIN STOCKS INTO ALL THE MARKETS AT UNSPECIFIED FIXED PRICES IN ORDER TO BRING PRICES DOWN AND TO END SPECULATION. HOWEVER, IN CERTAIN AREAS OF COUNTRY SUCH AS OUALLAM, TAROUA AND LOGA THERE IS NO GRAIN. CONSEQUENTLY, THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE FREE DISTRIBUTION. HE OBSERVED THAT THOSE FARMERS WHO HAD A SURPLUS, RELIEVED OF TAX, PREFERRED TO KEEP THEIR GRAIN AGAINST POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE DROUGHTS, WHEREAS MERCHANTS WERE SPECULATING. THE PROBLEM IS THAT GOVERNMENT SIMPLY DOES NOT HAVE NEARLY ENOUGH GRAIN TO GO AROUND. HE ADMITTED THAT A POOR HARVEST THIS YEAR

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WOULD BE CATASTROPHIC. HE REFERRED TO THE THREAT TO THE RICE CROP BY THE NORMALLY LOW LEVEL OF THE RIVER NOW TWO FEET BELOW ITS LOWEST PREVIOUS RECORDED LEVEL. THE GOVERNMENT HAD HOPED THAT RICE WOULD BE A PARTIAL HEDGE AGAINST INADEQUATE MILLET AND SORGHUM.

2. THE FRAGILE SUBSISTENCE ECOLOGY OF NIGER IS BEING SORELY

TRIED ONCE MORE. ALREADY, THE STRAIN ON THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE HERE IS BEGINNING TO SHOW. ALTHOUGH THERE SEEMS TO BE GENERAL ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL OF GOVERNMENT'S ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEM SO FAR, THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE TO MOUNT FORCEFUL ACTION TO CONTROL PRICES AND STOCK DISTRIBUTION. THIS WILL BE POPULAR AMONG THE PAYSANS BUT WILL BE RESENTED BY THE MORE POWERFUL COMMERCANTS. DISPUTE THE CURRENT EXAGGERATED PRICES (FROM 8,500 CFA PER BAG IN SOME AREAS TO 12,000 CFA IN OTHERS), GON APPEARS TO BE WAITING FOR PERIOD OF PEAK OR NEAR-PEAK PRICE BEFORE MAKING ITS MOVE TO MINIMIZE IMPACT OF DE FACTO, IF NOT DE JURE, PRICE CONTROLS. A JUST CONCLUDED SURVEY (SEPTAL FOLLOWS) BY TEMPORARY ASSIGNED FFP MONITOR OF DOSSO DEPARTMENT INDICATES THAT APPROXIMATELY 1/3 OF THE DEPARTMENT'S POPULATION OF 674,000 WILL REQUIRE SUBSTANTIAL FOOD ASSISTANCE.

3. ADDITIONAL AID FROM DONORS COULD STRENGTHEN GOVERNMENT'S HAND AND IN THE LONG RUN MIGHT REPRESENT A CHEAPER INVESTMENT NOW AGAINST THE COST OF DEALING WITH THE DIVERSE AND LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES OF A FOOD EMERGENCY. HOWEVER, DONORS HAVE BEEN SLOW TO ACT. ON THE OTHER HAND, OPINION THAT THIS YEAR'S DEFICIT, LIKELY TO BETWEEN 40,000 AND 50,000 MT GAINING INCREASINGLY WIDE ACCEPTANCE. CIDA, WHOSE REGIONAL TECHNICAL TEAM WAS JUST ENDED A RECONNAISSANCE OF THE FOOD SITUATION IN NIGER, IS INCREASINGLY CONCERNED, AND HAS REPORTEDLY RECOMMENDED AID SHIPMENTS, 3000 MT OF WHEAT TO NITAR, FOR DELIVERY AT AN EARLY DATE; WHILE FAC HAS EXPEDITED ITS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OWN CONSIGNMENT OF 4,000 MT OF SORGHUM FOR DELIVERY TO COTONOU IN LATE APRIL/EARLY MAY. JAMES

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Message Attributes

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